



Building partnerships
with people and places

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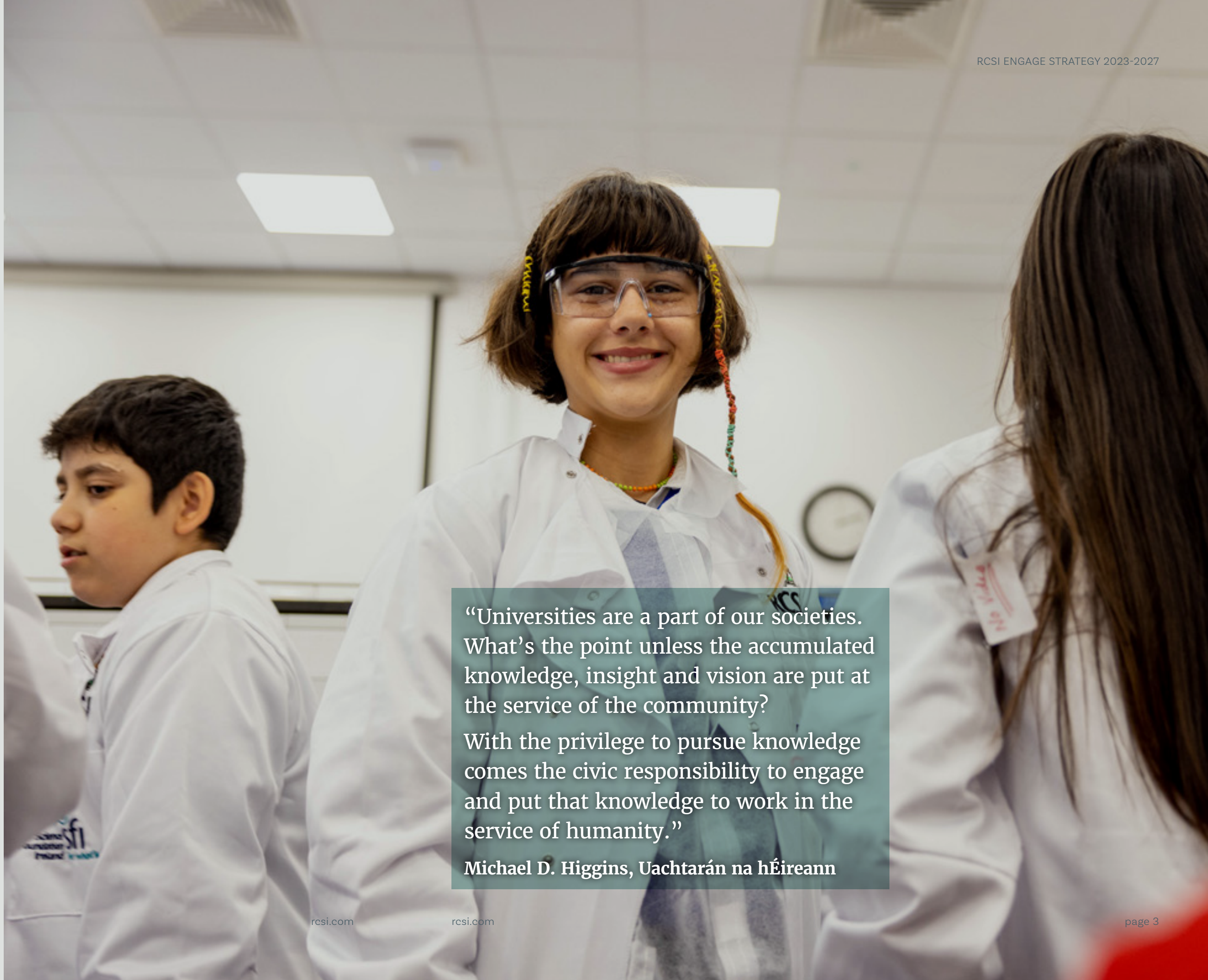
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“Universities are a part of our societies. What’s the point unless the accumulated knowledge, insight and vision are put at the service of the community?”

With the privilege to pursue knowledge comes the civic responsibility to engage and put that knowledge to work in the service of humanity.”

Michael D. Higgins, Uachtarán na hÉireann

RCSI Engage Vision

“To enhance human health and education through reciprocal partnerships between RCSI staff, students, clinicians and our local, national and international communities.”



What is a community?

Communities can be defined as communities of place, identity, and interest. One person can belong to several communities at once.

- A community of place is defined as a group of people with a geographic location in common for example where they live, work, or spend a significant portion of time.
- A community of identity can be defined as a group of people who share a particular experience, interest or stake in an issue, or characteristics such as ethnic groups, young people, and older people.
- A community of interest can be defined as a gathering of people assembled around a topic of common interest. Its members take part in the community to exchange information, to obtain answers to personal questions or problems, to improve their understanding of a subject, to share common passions or to play.

Message from our RCSI President



It has been almost 250 years since RCSI was founded as Ireland’s training college for the nation’s surgeons. From the beginning, patient care has been at the forefront of our work.

Today, we actively involve patients and the wider public in our education and research so that, together, we can advance treatments and improve care. Through this engagement strategy we want to deepen our partnerships with our many stakeholders and ensure that the voices of our community partners and patient contributors are heard.

In 2022, we launched a consultation process involving a wide range of community, patient, and public stakeholders to inform the development of [RCSI’s institutional strategy 2023-2027](#) and RCSI’s new building, at 118 St. Stephen’s Green. Due to open in 2025, this landmark building will create a new entrance into RCSI, allowing us to welcome the public and engage with our community partners and our valued stakeholders like never before.

By creating a dedicated engagement space at the front of the building, we want to foster greater interaction between our educators, clinicians, researchers, and students with the public, schools, charities, and policymakers to have an impact on health and wellbeing.

RCSI’s mission is to educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health - we want to engage our communities in achieving this mission.

Professor Laura Viani, RCSI, President

Message from our RCSI Vice Chancellor



As Ireland's only university dedicated solely to medicine and health sciences, RCSI is in a unique position to engage with communities and PPI contributors to ensure our research, education and training expertise addresses the health challenges facing society. We express this in our mission: *"to educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health"*.

In order to realise this mission, we have made an institution-wide commitment to achieving societal impact through meaningful collaboration with communities locally, nationally and internationally.

In 2007, we launched our REACH RCSI Programme, RCSI's access and community engagement programme, which connects RCSI with our local community in Dublin city centre, working in partnership to facilitate access to education and promote health awareness amongst people of all ages. Building on this, we developed our first campus-wide RCSI Engage Strategy. This was informed by our participation, together with 12 Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Irish pilot of the Carnegie Community Engagement Framework in 2016, supported by the Talloires Network. This set out our commitment and has guided our work in areas such as access and widening participation, community engagement in education, research, STEMM promotion, and student and staff volunteering.

We are also proud to collaborate regionally and nationally with partner Irish HEIs in promoting access and widening participation on the HEA Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH).

One of the most prominent ways we engage with the public is through our RCSI MyHealth programme which includes lectures and podcast series. These free events are led by RCSI academics, researchers and clinicians and aim to give people of all ages access to impartial and expert information on a range of health and wellbeing topics. The series continued throughout the pandemic where it moved to an online format and attracted audiences of over 15,000. We will continue to develop the [MyHealth programme](#), using audience feedback, to ensure it addresses the health issues that matter most to people.

Because of our rich history and heritage, RCSI holds a wealth of medical and healthcare archives dating back to the 18th Century and every year we commission new artworks from local artists that recognise key figures in Irish healthcare – past and present. This strategy also outlines our commitment to making our [heritage collections](#) accessible, both virtually, and in-person.

Strategy consultative lunch with PPI contributors, patient partners and patient organisations.



This new RCSI Engage Strategy 2023-2027 builds on all of this work and outlines how we will extend and embed our engagement and involvement activities across our teaching, learning, research, and extracurricular activities. It will drive the development of a range of reciprocal programmes that will benefit our local community, patients and the wider public nationally, while enriching our student and staff experience and contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

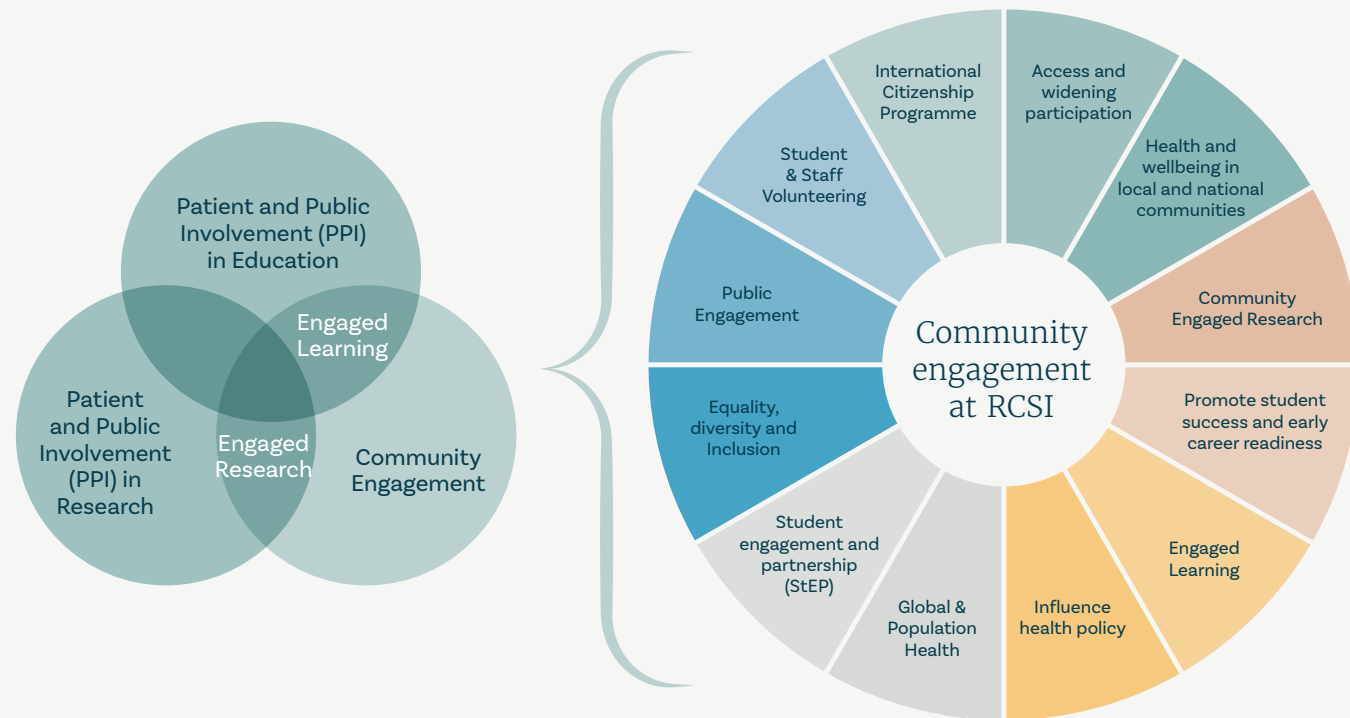
It also intersects with other areas of strategic focus. These include: our Sustainability and Climate Health Action Plan, Arts Strategy and global Alumni Engagement programme led by our Alumni Relations team who are deepening connections with 30,000 healthcare professionals across 96 countries. It also links to our engagement with clinicians, international education and research collaborators and our innovative Student Engagement Programme (StEP) and International Citizenship Programmes.

In delivering this strategy we aim to ensure that our research and education is impactful, meeting the needs of our community partners, patients, and the public and addressing their priorities in a reciprocal manner.

We look forward to further developing these partnerships through the implementation of this strategy and to making a positive difference together.

Professor Cathal Kelly, RCSI, Vice Chancellor and CEO / Registrar

Our vision for an Engaged University



Engagement is one of four guiding principles in [RCSI's Institutional Strategy \(2023-2027\)](#), along with Quality, Sustainability and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This RCSI Engage Strategy supports the delivery of the university's overarching priorities over the next 5 years and ensures engagement is embedded throughout the institution.

Through this strategy, we also aim to respond to national priorities. These include: facilitating access and widening participation in education among traditionally underrepresented groups¹; ambitions to make Ireland a European leader in STEMM education by 2026² and the 'Healthy Ireland' strategy 2021 - 2025³. This Government strategy envisages Ireland as a place where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility. We will ensure this strategy aligns with the ambitions of the National Action Plan for Open Research⁴ which aims to promote citizen science.

The primary focus of our Engage Strategy is to enhance how we engage with the public and local, national and international communities across the spectrum of education and research. It also complements our PPI in Education and PPI in Research activities led by our Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and Office of Research and Innovation and is

mindful of the national strategy [Innovation Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy](#). At RCSI, we also have a particular focus on partnering with students on strategic projects which involve education, research, operational improvements and community and public engagement, through our StEP Programme.

Governance

A cross-university Engagement Committee provides strategic direction and ensures engagement and involvement is embedded campus-wide. The committee is supported by strategic working groups that draw on relevant expertise from across the university and wider community. The Committee is chaired by RCSI's Director of International Engagement and External Relations and Academic Director of Engagement, and led by the Head of RCSI Engage. It reports to the Senior Management Team, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.

Our aim is to continue to ensure we have community, public and/or patient, and student representatives on our committee and relevant working groups to execute, deliver and drive the direction of our future strategy.

¹ <https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/national-access-plan-2022-2028/>
² <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4d40d5-stem-education-policy/>
³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/706608-healthy-ireland-policies/>
⁴ <https://norf.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/National-Action-Plan-for-Open-Research-webversion.pdf>

PPI in Education at RCSI

Involving patients and the public in our education

A key goal in the RCSI 2018-2022 Strategy was to deepen PPI in education and saw the establishment of the PPI in Education Committee. PPI in Education activities are now embedded throughout the student experience across all programmes. Patient-centred care is at the heart of all that we do at RCSI and making a difference to the lives of future patients is a vital element of our educational approach.

To prepare students for clinical placement education with patients, students practice on inanimate or live models and meet simulated patients and actors who portray the patient experience. They assess students and provide individualised feedback to enable students to reflect and hone their skills. Throughout their programmes, students learn from expert patients who educate students and enable them to understand the patient experience through storytelling and enhanced experiential understanding. The involvement comes full circle when patients come to RCSI to support final exams, in which students demonstrate the competence they have developed through their programme.

While patients are at the centre of student learning in RCSI on a day-to-day basis, patients and the public also help to shape the future of education in RCSI. Through the appointment of an RCSI lead on PPI in Education and the establishment of a PPI in Education Committee, which includes patient representatives, patient perspectives are embedded throughout our educational journey. Patient and public partners participate in designing cases for interactive learning sessions, shaping curriculum design and participating in committees that plan how future education will develop at RCSI.

We want to ensure that we learn and educate with patients, for patients and not just about patients. In that broad framework we include members of the public, as past and future patients and family members, and as representing the society which supports and maintains our healthcare and education systems.

Governance

PPI in Education at RCSI is guided by a multidisciplinary RCSI PPI in Education Committee inclusive of patient and public contributors, students and staff experienced in PPI. Our PPI in Education Committee is chaired by the Academic Lead for PPI in Education under the direction of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs. PPI in Education is represented on the Engagement Committee.



“People with lived experience of healthcare conditions, family members, members of the public, and other stakeholders have unique expertise and perspectives that can improve the quality of the research”

Pictured (l-r): Nuala Ryan, FutureNeuro PPI Panel member; Professor Gianpiero Cavalleri, Deputy Director of SFI FutureNeuro Research Centre and Professor of Human Genetics, School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences, RCSI; and Maeve Smith, Programme Manager, Office of the Chief Clinical Officer HSE.

PPI in Research at RCSI

Involving patients and the public in our research

During the RCSI 2018-2022 Strategy, RCSI made PPI in Research a key priority. This included the appointment of an academic lead and the establishment of the RCSI PPI in Research Committee. In 2021, RCSI joined the PPI Ignite Network as one of seven universities funded as part of a €5 million grant to drive innovation and excellence in PPI in Research at a national level.

The aim of our 2023-2027 strategy is to continue to build on these strong foundations and contribute to the national network through leadership of key work packages. This will be led by our RCSI PPI Ignite Network Lead and PPI Manager, who will work to build capacity at an institutional level and strengthen partnerships with individual patients and patient organisations.

As a patient-centric institution, RCSI fully appreciates that people with lived experience of healthcare conditions, family members, members

of the public, and other stakeholders have unique expertise and perspectives that can improve the quality of the research, right from research design through to dissemination of results and translation into healthcare practice. Therefore, all researchers at RCSI, from undergraduates to senior principal investigators are supported to develop the knowledge and skills required to successfully involve and engage patients, the public, and other stakeholders to ensure research is impactful.

Governance

The RCSI PPI Ignite Office is based in the Office of Research & Innovation under the direction of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research & Innovation. The RCSI PPI Ignite Network Lead and PPI Manager are strategically guided by a multidisciplinary RCSI PPI in Research Committee inclusive of representatives from patient organisations, individual PPI contributors, students, academics and researchers experienced in PPI. PPI in Research is represented on the Engagement Committee.

Figure 1: UN Sustainable Development Goals



Community Engagement and UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs)

Sustainability is a way of living in balance with the world and that includes the health of our communities, economies and individuals.

RCSI recognises that we have a responsibility to advance the UNSDGs by 2030. Our community engagement plays an important role in contributing to this institutional and national commitment and align with the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Ireland to 2030 and the international SDG Accord framework.

We are particularly focused on achieving the targets under the SDG 3 Goal: “To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” which is recognized by our status in the World’s Top 50 of universities in the THE Impact Ranking for SDG3 for the past 4 years and ranked number 1 in 2023.

Throughout this strategy, we have indicated where our activities are contributing to the 17 individual UNSDGs to show the breadth of our work.

1 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8c8bb-esd-to-2030-second-national-strategy-on-education-for-sustainable-development/>



01
Promoting Health and Wellbeing:
Locally and nationally



Dublin City Council & RCSI Ballroom of Romance.

Health and Wellbeing locally

RCSI is located in the heart of Dublin city with a network of teaching hospitals, healthcare partners and community partners across the island of Ireland. We encourage our staff, students, researchers and clinicians to engage with all our communities in education, research, volunteering and to advocate wellbeing.

Mercer’s Medical Centre

RCSI’s Mercer’s Medical Centre is the largest primary care centre in Dublin’s inner city. Located on the site of the old Mercer Hospital, the practice is committed to honouring the legacy of the founder of the Mercer Hospital, Mary Mercer, by providing healthcare for the local community of inner-city Dublin, RCSI staff and students.

Through REACH RCSI, our community engagement and access programme, we work in partnership with our local community in Dublin’s South Inner City to develop and deliver initiatives aimed at promoting health and wellbeing.

SFI BAROMETER

“85% of respondents felt that scientists have a professional responsibility to talk about their research findings with the public”

SFI, 2021



Pictured (l-r): Amit Kalra, 2022/3 President of the RCSI Undergraduate Students’ Union; Professor Suzanne McDonough, Chair of the RCSI Healthy Campus Committee and Head of RCSI School of Physiotherapy; Caroline McMahon, National Healthy Campus Coordinator; and RCSI Vice Chancellor Professor Cathal Kelly.

Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme (SHCP)

RCSI is proud to be an academic partner of Dublin City Council. Over the course of this strategy, we will collaborate with community partners to reduce health inequalities and support health interventions in the Healthy Ireland and Sláintecare Healthy Communities (SHC) Programme. SHCP is a cross-government initiative to deliver increased health and wellbeing services to 19 community areas across Ireland. Dublin city has four Sláintecare Healthy Community Programme areas where RCSI will work collaboratively to engage in public health education and research initiatives.

RCSI is a signatory to the **Higher Education Authority (HEA) Healthy Campus Charter and Framework**. The Charter encourages “a holistic understanding of health, takes a whole campus approach and aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health and wellbeing of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential.”

The RCSI Engage strategy will support the Healthy Campus Committee which is aimed at promoting health and wellbeing to staff and students and wider community.

² <https://hea.ie/policy/health-and-wellbeing-landing-page/healthy-campus-landing-page/>

“Higher education plays a central role in all aspects of the development of individuals, communities, societies and cultures – locally and globally”

The Okanagan Charter



RCSI MyHealth

The University's flagship [RCSI MyHealth Programme](#) includes a free lecture series that aims to demystify common health issues by drawing expertise and insight from our team of researchers and international health experts at the cutting-edge of medical and healthcare developments. Our academics and clinicians also share their knowledge through the media via a freely available '[RCSI MyHealth Expert Directory](#)'.

Audience participation in an RCSI MyHealth lecture: "Arthritis - My Joint Health"

Health and Wellbeing Nationally Public Engagement

RCSI public engagement describes the myriad of ways that our scientists, clinicians, educators, and students engage with society on critical scientific and health issues.

RCSI public engagement activity spans:

- Health information and public education
- STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) communication and promotion
- Cultural and creative engagement

Mental Health Educate (mentalhealtheducate.ie) is a website that provides access to a range of resources about young people's mental health. Developed by RCSI clinicians, researchers, and academics in partnership with collaborators across the education, arts, and online sectors, the resources are primarily aimed at educators but are free to use by anyone with an interest in exploring issues affecting young people's mental health.

The SFI Discover funded "[Debunking the Myths: The Science Behind our Sexual Health](#)" is also aimed at post-primary students. Developed by RCSI's Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department at the Rotunda Hospital, the programme aims to provide clear and reliable information in relation to sexual health and to stimulate open discussion and curiosity around the topic.

The RCSI Centre for Positive Health Sciences developed a range of 'Science of Health and Happiness' public courses tailored for varying demographic audiences, exploring aspects of lifestyle medicine and happiness throughout the lifecycle and sharing strategies aimed at fostering positive health¹.

¹ <https://www.healthpromotingcampuses.org/>



Broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan is pictured with artists with intellectual disabilities at the Connecting Artists 2023 exhibition, hosted by RCSI



RCSI Head Porter, Mr Frank Donegan, sharing details of the College's history with members of the public during Heritage Week 2022.



Tommy O'Neill and Frank Cousins, members of the Men's Shed social enterprise, with Liz Hughes (RCSI Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) and Kate Kelly (RCSI Library). The Men's Shed were commissioned by RCSI to build bespoke cabinets to display the Abraham Colles archive

Cultural and Creative Engagement

RCSI has been shaping healthcare in Ireland for over 230 years. Our **College Archive** tells the story of RCSI during this time, while the rich history of surgery and medicine in Ireland is reflected in the wealth of our heritage and art collections. Cultural and creative approaches to engagement encourage reflection on our role as individuals and communities in Ireland’s healthcare story, and complement broader teaching, learning, and research engagement activity across RCSI.

RCSI’s Heritage and Art strategies leverage these collections to promote cultural and creative engagement with health and wellbeing. Our objective for 2027 is to encourage people to explore our collections as a means of engaging with the past, present, and future of healthcare in Ireland and our collective national identity. We will do this by supporting enhanced awareness and visibility of heritage and art in RCSI. This will increase access to our collections and enable enhanced in-person and virtual interpretative and engagement opportunities through the new Public Engagement Space (PES) at 118 St. Stephen’s Green.

Ireland’s Healthcare Heritage

The launch of a new RCSI Digital Heritage Collections in 2022 provides free public access to digitised material from the heritage collections. Our aim is to augment the content and functionality of this platform to make it a key resource for exploring and interacting with Ireland’s surgical and medical past. A series of online exhibitions and publications celebrate the history of healthcare in Ireland and the legacy of influential Irish physicians and surgeons such as Sir Charles Alexander Cameron in 2021/22 and Abraham Colles in 2023. We will continue to develop our community and schools outreach and engagement programme in collaboration with **REACH RCSI**.

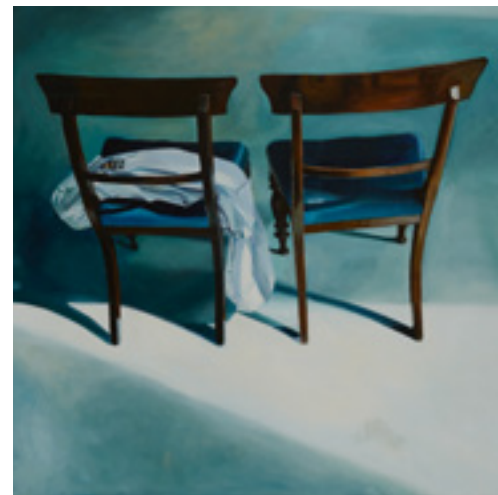
Art in RCSI

A key objective of the RCSI Arts Strategy is to support the growth of RCSI as a role model among our peers through our art collections and engagement activity. We engage directly with the arts community in Ireland to promote emerging and established artistic talent through the annual **RCSI Art Award**, in partnership with the RHA and the Irish Times, and our ongoing commissioning activity. The **Women on Walls** campaign, in partnership with Accenture, saw the commission of a new portrait series celebrating the achievements of eight extraordinary women in RCSI history and enhancing the visibility of pioneering female leaders in healthcare. This portrait series and other commissioned works feature prominently in regular free guided tours of our buildings for members of the public and other visitors and stakeholders. We have also increased virtual access to collections that may not normally be accessible to the public due to their location, including the publication of the **Anatomy Room Gallery Catalogue**.

We aim to build on the success of these initiatives by embedding cultural and creative approaches to health and wellbeing engagement in Public Engagement Space programming and developing our virtual and in-person engagement activity. We will continue to work with external partner agencies such as the **Heritage Council**, **Arts Council**, and **Irish Architecture Foundation** to offer cultural and creative opportunities for public engagement during **Heritage Week**, **Culture Night**, and **Open House**. We will also develop collaborative relationships with other institutions in the cultural heritage and arts sectors to expand our reach across communities and society.



In 2023, RCSI celebrated the 250th anniversary of the birth of pioneering Irish surgeon and anatomist, Abraham Colles. Colles was a leading figure in the golden age of Irish medicine, revolutionising the teaching of anatomy during his lifetime and paving the way for new insights into the structure and workings of the human body for centuries to come.



Artwork, entitled ‘I make these promises solemnly, freely and upon my honour’, was created by Mary A. Kelly, winner of the RCSI Art Award 2019 in association with The Irish Times and the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) Annual Exhibition. The painting is inspired by the RCSI Declaration and White Coat Ceremony.



118 St Stephen’s Green, New Engagement Space

In support of healthier futures, RCSI is committed to creating a Public Engagement Space and gallery dedicated to health and wellbeing in our new building at 118 St. Stephen’s Green, in the heart of Dublin.

RCSI will collaborate with patients, public and communities to co-create health and wellbeing initiatives and enhance awareness of scientific discoveries, making connections between science and society, researchers with patients and citizens, policy makers and industry.

RCSI will bring new audiences and communities together to explore lifestyle and wellness, in innovative and interactive ways, facilitating two-way conversations to get the best advice and information to make informed choices for their future. We will involve people in meaningful dialogue about how to live long, happy and healthy lives, maximising the intervention of scientific research and innovation to positively influence health policy, health service provision and health outcomes in Ireland.

OUR VISION FOR 2027:

- ~ Open a Public Engagement Space and Gallery in our new building at 118 St Stephen’s Green and co-create an inspiring programme that will involve and engage patients and the public in communicating and translating our research across online and in person platforms.
- ~ Build capacity for STEM communications and public engagement among staff and students
- ~ Encourage exploration of our heritage collections as a means of engaging with the past, present, and future of Irish healthcare
- ~ Collaborate with Dublin City Council as an academic partner in the Dublin Healthy City programme and wider Sláintecare Healthy Communities Plan
- ~ Build on the success of the RCSI MyHealth Lecture Series and Expert Directory, RCSI Rotunda’s Debunking the Myths Programme, the suite of Science of Health and Happiness programme.
- ~ Increase the breadth and diversity of our audiences for the RCSI MyHealth lecture and Podcast series and continue to build our RCSI MyHealth Expert Directory to further support expert, impartial health and wellbeing information to the general public, media, and policymakers.



02 Education, Access and Widening Participation

RCSI is committed to facilitating access and widening participation of underrepresented groups in higher education and to contributing to the creation of a future healthcare workforce reflective of Ireland's diverse population. Throughout the period of this strategy, we will, through collaboration with the HEA, increase the diversity of students and expand places for EU students across all our programmes, with a particular focus on increased opportunities for access students.

Our aim is to offer pre-entry support, entry routes, and support services that create equal access to, participation in, and outcomes for all students at RCSI.

Working in partnership across the education sector, we will enhance our wide range of activities to support the learner journey - inspiring primary and post primary students interested in pursuing a career in healthcare by working collaboratively to raise aspirations, widen participation, and build a diverse student body of future healthcare professionals reflective of society.

above: RCSI's Transition Year (TY) MiniMed programmes offer TY students the opportunity to experience what it is like to train and work as a doctor.

"The ambitions of the new strategic action plan are that the higher education student body entering, participating in and completing higher education, at all levels and across all programmes reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population"

National Access Plan 2022-2028

RCSI reserves 12% of School Leaver places for students applying through the HEAR and DARE Schemes.

RCSI Access and Widening Participation programme spans pre-entry programmes targeting primary and post-primary schools, entry routes and post-entry support and working collaboratively with community partners and educational institutions locally and nationally.



Pre-Entry

The REACH RCSI community engagement and access programme works in partnership with community partners to raise the aspirations of primary and post-primary students and co-create learning opportunities with a focus on STEMM promotion, to enhance educational attainment, and facilitate access to further and higher education.

RCSI students, societies and staff are involved with the REACH RCSI programme through **co-creation of initiatives, volunteering** and **engaged learning** aimed at removing barriers to progression and supporting access to further and higher education among traditionally underrepresented groups.

Primary School

We co-create and deliver a series of curriculum aligned educational workshops and 'hands-on' STEMM activities in schools and on RCSI's campus. These promote STEMM and health and wellbeing among younger children and support the Aistear early childhood and Primary Curriculum Framework.

For example, the RCSI Teddy Bear Hospital and Paediatric Society **school visit volunteer programme** helps familiarise children with healthcare and healthcare professionals and overcome any anxieties about visiting the doctor or hospital. This reciprocal engagement with children brings health education to the classroom and helps RCSI students build essential skills for future healthcare leaders.

Primary teacher participating in a “sense walk” in St. Stephen’s Green



Primary Teacher CPD

Over 300 primary school teachers have participated in the REACH RCSI Primary Science for Teachers Initiative. This involves RCSI staff working in partnership across educational sectors to support primary school teachers to enhance their science teaching skills in a higher education environment. The initiative aims to build teacher confidence to conduct hands-on STEMM activities and experiments in the classroom – leading the next generation towards a career in science and healthcare.

Post-Primary School

REACH RCSI Junior Researcher Programme, co-created with our link DEIS post-primary schools, and funded by **Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Discover** seeks to engage and inspire STEMM curiosity and confidence among Junior Cycle school students. Interactive sessions on campus and in school, supported by RCSI researchers and PhD scholar volunteer mentors, aim to encourage participants to develop an interest in and enthusiasm for science. It also raises awareness of the diversity of STEMM careers, pathways to those careers, and supports and opportunities available for access students.



RCSI Volunteer Mentor Suhitha Mahadev leads her team of Junior Researchers in the lab.



Recognising the valued input of community partners at Junior Researcher Science Week Mini Symposium.

Participants learning CPR skills during RCSI Transition Year (TY) Programme.



Transition Year (TY) Programmes

The annual RCSI Transition Year (TY) programmes TY MiniMed, MiniPHARM, MiniPHYSIO, offer TY students an excellent opportunity to gain experience of what it is like to train and work as a healthcare professional. The programme consists of lectures, practicals, and real-life surgeries via video link to the operating theatre, all of which are carried out by leading professionals in their respective areas. Places are reserved on each programme to support the participation of students from underrepresented groups.

Programme for Access to Higher Education

RCSI works regionally in collaboration with partner Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on the Higher Education Authority (HEA) funded **Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)**, which aims to promote and advance equality of access to higher education for underrepresented groups.

RCSI is a member of the HEA PATH Leinster Pillar 1 Cluster, working collaboratively with five other HEIs in this consortium: Trinity College Dublin (TCD), University College Dublin (UCD), National College of Art and Design (NCAD), Institute of Art and Design (IADT), and Marino Institute of Education (MIE). This collaborative approach facilitates the sharing of learning and experience among HEIs to address issues of educational inequality and community engagement.

Collaborative HEA PATH initiatives include:

- **Creative Arts Summer School (CASS)** - is delivered across the six institutions within the cluster and provides scope for intergenerational participation to facilitate those with caring responsibilities and is linked with further education, DEIS schools, and a range of cultural institutions to raise awareness of creative qualifications and the opportunities within the creative industries.
- **Community Mentoring** - Access students from each member HEI volunteer as Community Mentors who share their college experience and information to support and inspire prospective students.
- **Dublin Learning City (DLC)** is a partnership with the six partner HEIs, Dublin City Council, Dublin City ETB and Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB and has achieved the UNESCO Learning City Award for Dublin in 2021. DLC focuses on promoting lifelong learning for all and access to higher education, effectively mobilizing resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education; encouraging learning in families and communities with a specific focus on access target groups.
- **1916 ‘Leaders and Learners’ Bursary** aims to encourage participation and success in higher education by students who are the most socio-economically disadvantaged and who are from communities significantly underrepresented in higher education
- **HEA PATH 4** - supporting inclusive universally designed higher education environments for all students, including those with intellectual disabilities
- **HEA PATH 5** - to increase the participation and progression of Traveller and Roma students in Higher Education and to support the achievement of the Government’s National Access Plan (2022-2028) targets.

Tim Lawler, RCSI SIM instructor, shows Sofia Khan from Cabinteely Community School in Dublin and Sunniva Johnston from Sacred Heart School in Tullamore, how to manage a simulated emergency in RCSI's mock operating room.



Access Routes to RCSI

In support of access, widening participation and lifelong learning RCSI recognises prior learning for applicants in accordance with its policy on our **Recognition of Prior Learning**.

RCSI welcomes applications from Mature Entry applicants. The aim of the Mature Entry pathway is to widen access and provide an opportunity for individuals who may not otherwise find it possible to join a programme. The Mature Entry pathway attempts to select students in a holistic manner and focuses on life experience such as volunteer work or relevant work experience, in addition to the candidate's academic background.

RCSI is part of the 'Free Fees Initiative' funded by the HEA. Currently all QQI Level 8 degrees are funded by the 'Free Fees Initiative'.

RCSI participates in the national admissions schemes: **Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)**, which promote equality of access for school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds or school leavers whose disabilities have negatively impacted their educational journey.

RCSI was involved in the **National Student and Researcher programme** supporting displaced Ukrainian people seeking access to third level education in Ireland and has welcomed five students now enrolled in the BSc Advanced Therapeutic Technologies (Hons), School of Pharmacy, and Biomolecular Sciences. As a member of the international Scholars At Risk network, we also support displaced academics and scholars from areas of conflict, which includes hosting two post-doctoral students from Ukraine through the MSCA4Ukraine Fellowship Scheme.

RCSI Access Scholarships

Our current scholarships, funded through a combination of philanthropy and grant funding include:

- ★ Aim High Medicine Scholarship
- ★ Ireland Healthcare Aim High Scholarship
- ★ Kiran Pathak Pharmacy Scholarship
- ★ Traveller and Roma Community Access Scholarship
- ★ HEA funded 1916 Bursary
- ★ Uiversity Scholarship
- ★ NUI Equal Educational Opportunities Scheme



Supporting Current Students

RCSI is committed to providing an accessible, non-discriminatory learning environment within a student community where there is full and equal inclusion and participation for all.

RCSI's **learning access and facilitation (LAFS) team** supports students seeking assistance with access to learning and/or facilitation of learning due to a registered disability, an ongoing significant medical condition, or a learning difficulty. The primary objective is to remove, as far as possible, any barriers or impairments to learning and provide, where possible, appropriate resources and measures to facilitate the achievement of academic and professional goals.

We will develop our support for RCSI Access students through a range of grants, bursaries and scholarships supported by the university and our alumni. We will also provide the infrastructure needed to enable students to thrive and progress throughout their time at RCSI.

OUR VISION FOR 2027:

- ~ Build a community of practice among staff and student volunteers to support STEM engagement programme (Primary, Post Primary)
- ~ Enhance our access data collection and analysis to inform access planning
- ~ Manage RCSI participation in HEAR (Higher Education Access Route) and DARE (Disability Access Route) admissions scheme
- ~ Continue our membership and support of HEA PATH Leinster 1 Cluster
- ~ Develop and implement detailed action plans for the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) 4 (Universal Design (UD) approaches and inclusive practices in HEIs)
- ~ Develop and implement detailed action plan for the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) 5 to support participation and progression of Traveller and Roma Communities in HE
- ~ Leverage the new Public Engagement Space at 118 St Stephen's Green to deepen involvement, engagement, and collaboration between science and society, researchers and citizens, policy makers and innovators
- ~ Enhance philanthropic support for access scholarships
- ~ Increase awareness of access and participation routes/ scholarships and bursaries through our community partnerships, networks and communication strategies
- ~ Enhance our support for Primary for Primary Teacher CPD



RCSI Paediatric students learning together with REACH RCSI primary school partners.



03 Engaged Learning

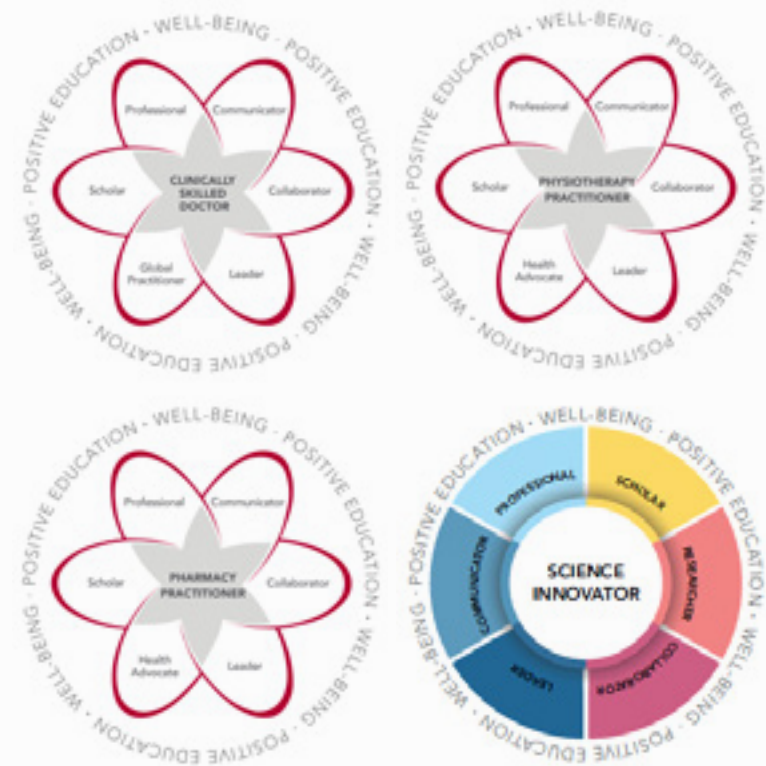


Our Engaged Learning Approach

One of the core educational principles at RCSI is experiential learning where all our students and trainees gain knowledge and expertise from exposure to 'real-life' experiences alongside academic theory. This is reflected in our core competencies diagrams right.

Experiential learning includes engaged learning, PPI in Education and student volunteering. We are committed to embedding the principles and practices of Engaged Learning into our Medicine and Health Sciences curricula, where appropriate.

We will aim to enhance our suite of credit bearing modules across our programmes where public, patient and community groups learn with RCSI students. Experiential learning is a core educational principle at RCSI. Components of the continuum of RCSI experiential learning span engaged learning, PPI in Education and student volunteering.



RCSI Graduate Attributes. Participating in engagement activities during their time at RCSI is integral to the development of graduate attributes and values.

Postgraduate Training and CPD

We will ensure that all our engagement efforts align with the public and patient engagement activities driven by our accreditation bodies and partners in the Health Service, in particular seeking out collaborations with the National Clinical Programmes and our focus on Sustainable Healthcare.

As a member of the international Scholars At Risk network, we also support displaced academics and scholars from areas of conflict, which includes hosting two post-doctoral students from Ukraine through the MSCA4Ukraine Fellowship Scheme.

OUR VISION FOR 2027:

- ~ Develop and implement a “school-led” approach, nurture a culture of Engaged learning, and build a community of practice within RCSI
- ~ Ensure the new Public Engagement Space at 118 St Stephen’s Green will enhance Engaged Learning and PPI in education
- ~ Enhance our data on engaged learning activity and impact
- ~ Increase the number of patient, community and public groups involved in engaged learning



04 Volunteering – Supporting our staff and students to make a difference

RCSI has a long tradition of student and staff volunteering in our local, national, and international communities. In addition to supporting others, volunteering has positive effects on volunteers' wellbeing as well as their personal and professional development. It also supports an array of UNSDG contributions, including **UNSDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals** via local, national, and international volunteerism.

In 2022, RCSI joined a prestigious group of medical schools to be recognised by the ASPIRE Programme which assesses international excellence in education in a medical, dental, or veterinary school. Student Engagement in the local community is a key component of the ASPIRE Award.

The same year, our student volunteer Working Group conducted the first internal student **volunteering survey** to learn from our students' experiences and identify areas of interest in future volunteering.

While altruistic motivation remains the primary driver, participation in extracurricular activities and volunteering have become increasingly important for the RCSI student experience. Students who volunteer identified benefits from skills development in communication and empathy; a greater understanding of their patients and insights into career progression post-graduation.

Local resident Gerry receiving a gift bag from Diane Wiehe, Medical Student and Maria Kelly, Head of RCSI Engage

RESPONDENTS TO THE 2022 RCSI STUDENT VOLUNTEER SURVEY

“Solidified my choice to apply for medicine, enjoyed working with people and children, gave me purpose during restrictions to feel like I was helping in some way”
RCSI Year 1 Medicine, Volunteer, Citywest Vaccination Centre

“As a physio student it helps me empathise with patients and see what challenges older adults face in their day to day lives.”
RCSI Physiotherapy student, Age & Opportunity Volunteer



RCSI Student Volunteer Opportunities with our International Community Partners

International volunteerism of staff and students has a long history at RCSI. Our ambition during the period of this strategy is to enhance our internal supports and create new opportunities with international charities and Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs).

Christina Noble Children's Foundation (CNCF)

CNCF is dedicated to serving the health, education, and emotional needs of vulnerable children who are at risk of exploitation, trafficking, and violence through its three humanitarian areas of work: Healthcare, Education, and Community Development. RCSI students have volunteered since 2005 at the **Sunshine Social and Medical Centre (SSMC)**, Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). The aim of the SSMC is to provide an international standard of care to orphans and children from extremely poor families from HCMC and surrounding provinces. The centre provides disadvantaged children with access to high quality comprehensive care so they can reach their optimal physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological, and social functional levels for successful integration into their communities.



The Olive Branch for Children (“TOBFC”)

The Olive Branch for Children (“TOBFC”) helps remote communities in Tanzania assess their primary needs and establishes programs that target the most vulnerable in those communities. RCSI students volunteer with The Olive Branch for Children Mobile Medical Clinic which operates in the most remote communities in their catchment area. The clinic provides baseline healthcare, focusing on child and maternal health, HIV testing and care, malaria testing and treatment, diagnosis and treatment of basic medical issues, wound care, family planning, blood pressure monitoring and emergency referrals to permanent health facilities.

OUR VISION FOR 2027:

- ~ Co-develop volunteer opportunities with community partners and RCSI Engage student committee locally, nationally and internationally based on the findings of our 2022 student survey
- ~ Establish a clear support infrastructure for local, national and international student volunteering
- ~ Develop volunteer recognition and reward systems



05 Engaged Research



Engaged research describes a wide range of rigorous research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaborative engagement with the community. It aims to improve, understand, or investigate an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges.

Our strategy aligns with Impact 2030: Ireland’s Research and Innovation Strategy and the ambitions of the National Action Plan for Open Research which aims to embed the engagement of citizens, public, patients and the end users of research across the entire research process. It will also support the development of public engagement with research, strengthen links between open research and related agendas and activities including research culture, research integrity, open education and public engagement with research (also referred to as citizen science).

RCSI actively engages with communities on an international scale across Africa, Asia and other resource-poor regions. The RCSI Institute of Global Surgery supports the training, retention, upskilling and career development of surgery, anaesthesia, nursing and obstetric caregivers from health workers to specialists and strengthens the delivery of surgical services and the surgical ecosystem. All RCSI international global surgery projects are carried out with local partners to foster

long-term benefits and sustainability for surgically underserved populations and aim to ensure children and rural communities have access to surgical care.

Sample projects such as SURG-Water in which the Institute of Global Surgery are increasing access to safe water in rural health centres in Malawi to improve maternal health outcomes. The RCSI SURG-Water team is one of six competing research teams developing innovative solutions to climate action challenges in the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and Irish Aid Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Challenge.

Since 2007, RCSI has supported the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) to improve the standards of surgical care in the region by advancing surgical education, training and examinations. This deep and wide-ranging collaborative programme is supported by Irish Aid. Supported by the collaboration programme, COSECSA has grown to be the largest single contributor to the surgical workforce in the region, with almost 1,000 trainees enrolled across 14 member countries and in accredited training sites in other countries in Africa. 632 surgeons have graduated as of December 2021.

People of the village of Nsungwi unloading 200 mbaulas (improved cookstoves) that will be distributed as second stoves to complete multiple tasks such as cooking and heating water simultaneously. The mbaula is locally made and cheap, and villagers will also be trained to make them.

Each year RCSI recognises staff involved in Engaged Research. The case study below is the 2022 award winner:



RCSI Engaged Research Award winner 2022: Growing up in a Pandemic: how participatory approaches to studying the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people’s health and wellbeing in Ireland. In partnership with SWAN Youth Service, Ballybough Youth Service, and the Dublin NEIC Co-operative.

Despite being one of the groups most disadvantaged by the lockdown, young people and their behaviours have received a disproportionate level of scrutiny and blame for ‘breaking rules’, yet have much less power to influence policy and change. Research examining the lived experience and impact of COVID-19 on young people is needed to better develop and target supports for those most vulnerable and affected.

Teenpath COVID is a mixed-methods, participatory study that aims to centre young people in co-producing this evidence. In partnership with local and national youth organisations such as this country-wide study will gather quantitative and qualitative data to explore the role of social networks in young people’s mental wellbeing, and disruptions to these network structures throughout the pandemic. The goal of this research is to capture and document these experiences to highlight and understand the key issues affecting young people, and outline protective factors that have supported them throughout this period.



RCSI PhD researcher meets with community household members during a field visit to Bundelkhand, India.

OUR VISION FOR 2027:

- Build institutional capacity for Engaged Research
- Develop the RCSI website to allow public/patients to register their interest in becoming involved with Engaged Research/PPI in Research
- Enhance our data and insight on Engaged Research activity
- Embed PPI and Engaged Research in the programme of content for the new Public Engagement Space at 118 St. Stephen’s Green
- Progress our Academic Partnership with Dublin City Council to work collaboratively to reduce health inequalities



06 Evaluating our Impact, Recognition & Reward

Over the next five years of this strategy, RCSI is committed to building on our engagement efforts to benefit society. In order to track our progress, we will develop the infrastructure needed to measure and report on our societal impact. We recognise and reward staff and student contribution to community, public and patient engagement and involvement through structured awards and celebratory events. We will further enhance our methods for reward and recognition throughout the period of this strategy.

OUR VISION FOR 2027:

- ~ Establish a framework to support planning, evaluation, measurement, data collection and impact of RCSI Engagement activity across research, teaching and learning, student volunteering, access and widening participation, and public engagement.
- ~ This framework will be informed by best-practice evaluation tools developed nationally by Campus Engage, and international standards set by the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification Framework.
- ~ Continue to promote civic and community engagement through our institutional strategy and include metrics on societal impact, sustainability, access and widening participation
- ~ Disseminate our impact by embedding our engagement activity in our strategic communications strategy
- ~ Join national and international networks and develop strategic partnerships with relevant community, public and government agencies to inform best practice.
- ~ Continue to enhance methods for recognition and reward of staff, students and communities and PPI contributors involved in engagement activity across the university

Definitions of Engagement

Community Engagement: “A mutually beneficial knowledge-based collaboration between the higher education institution with the wider community, through community-campus partnerships including the activities of community engaged learning, community engaged research, volunteering, community/economic regeneration, capacity-building and access/widening participation”

Source: Campus Engage

Community Engaged teaching and learning are academic approaches that seek to engage and accredit students, within the curriculum, for working in partnership with civic and civil society organisations (CSOs) to act on local societal challenges.

Source: Campus Engage

Volunteering (Student and/or staff) Higher education student/staff volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society, the environment or individuals outside one’s immediate family.

Source: Campus Engage

Access and Widening Participation Equity of access to higher education is a fundamental principle of Irish education policy and a priority for the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Higher Education Authority. People should have equity of access to education independent of their socioeconomic background, ethnicity, gender, geographical location, disability or other circumstances.

Source: National Access Plan (NAP) 2022 – 2028

Public and patient involvement (PPI) in research means that the public and patients are involved in planning and doing research from start to finish and help tell the public about the results of research. PPI research ensures that those who are most affected and impacted by the research conducted have a say in what research is done and how it is done.

Source: National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)

Engaged research describes a wide range of rigorous research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaborative engagement with the community. It aims to improve, understand, or investigate an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges.

Source: Campus Engage

Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in education is embedded throughout the RCSI student journey as they learn from expert patients who educate through sharing their stories, enable understanding of the patient experience, and support final-year exams. Simulated patients and actors portray the patient experience, assess and provide individualised feedback, enabling student reflection. Patients and the public also help to shape the future of RCSI education through involvement in case design for interactive learning sessions, shaping curriculum, and committee membership.

Public Engagement captures a broad range of initiatives, activities and events which combine to create a culture of societal engagement with higher education. Public engagement is about the institution facing outwards and connecting as widely as possible to communicate the value of learning and research and to leverage institutional knowledge and resources for social good.

Source: Campus Engage



RCSI Engage



RCSI Engage



RCSI PPI Ignite



RCSI

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